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ABSTRACT

A survey questionnaire designed to determine whether faculty, students, and administrators were aware of the policies governing student rights, freedoms, and involvements at their college was responded to by 143 students and 142 faculty members from El Centro Junior College in Texas and Santa Fe Junior College in Florida. Data showed that there is no definite knowledgeable understanding of the rights, freedoms, and involvements among the respondent junior college students and faculty at the colleges sampled. From the findings of this limited study and from observations, it is felt that there is not a high correlation between campus unrest and lack of information. (CA)

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SURVEY OF STUDENT RIGHTS, FREEDOMS AND INVOLVEMENTS

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At the League for Innovation meeting in May 1968, a proposal, Student Rights, Freedoms and Involvements, was sponsored by Santa Fe Junior College. It was voted as a project for further investigation.

League members were requested to send published college information on the topic, but the nature and scope of the materials received did not lend themselves to analysis. Therefore, a survey questionnaire was designed to secure the data in a standardized form, and to determine whether faculty, students and administrators were aware of the policies governing student rights, freedoms and involvements at their college.

The survey questionnaire items were related to, if not identical with, the statements in the Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students, sponsored, approved as desirable, and endorsed by five national educational organizations during 1967-1968. The questions were planned so that a "yes" answer to each would indicate the college had such a policy and the respondent was functionally knowledgeable about it. It would also show that there was adequate communication among the policy makers, the faculties and the students; and that the policies were in agreement with those recommended by the Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students. A "no" response would indicate the college did not have such a policy and the respondent knew it; a "do not know" simply indicated a lack of information. Two additional response options were available; they were "sometimes" and "does not apply." In both cases they were not selected in enough instances to be reportable.

Three colleges agreed to participate in the pilot phase. They were El Centro Junior College in Dallas, Seattle Central Community College in Seattle and Santa Fe Junior College in Gainesville, Florida. El Centro Junior College and Santa Fe Junior College returned their questionnaires, and these are the basis for this analysis.

SURVEY ANALYSIS

The analysis presented in this report was the combined college questionnaire results from El Centro and Santa Fe. The sample included a total of 143 student responses and 142 from the faculty.

In the total sample, 80 per cent of both the students and faculty indicated they understood the admission policy of their college, and knew that it was available in print; that public and college facilities were open to students; that free discussion was encouraged in the classroom; that student organizations were open to all students; and that a student publication existed.

Better than one-half of the student-faculty samples responded "yes" with 20 to 40 per cent responding "do not know" to the following statements:

(1) The College secured equal access to public facilities for students.

(2) The College had stated procedures for review of grades.
(3) Student organizations were required to submit a statement of purpose; they were free to choose their own advisors, the role of the advisors was clearly defined; and they were aware that when they invited a speaker or guest, they were responsible that the event was conducted in a manner appropriate to an academic community.
(4) Students were full participating members of Student Affairs Committees.
(5) The role and purpose of the student government were clearly defined in a formal document of the school.
(6) Student publications were produced either totally or partially in conjunction with journalism programs.
(7) Disciplinary procedures were formulated and available to students in written form.
(8) The standards of behavior which the college considered essential to its educational mission and its community life were in published form.

The "do not know" category was checked by more than half of the sample, with 20 to 40 per cent responding "yes", to the following statements:

(1) The College had a written policy statement concerning the confidentiality of information about students and the conditions under which the information could be transmitted.
(2) Students were full participating members on Academic Affairs, Curriculum, Admissions and other official committees.
(3) The role of student publications was written and available.

It is important to note that 40 per cent of both faculty and students responded "yes" and 30 per cent "no" to the statement that performance in the classroom was evaluated solely on an academic basis.

Some questionnaire items were designed so that a "no" response was the more desirable. Thirty per cent of the respondents checked "no" in answering these items: (1) the College maintained files on the political activities of students; (2) affiliation with an extramural organization disqualified a student organization from institutional recognition; and (3) the College paid bail for students involved in violations of civil law.

The respondents expressed a lack of knowledge (50 per cent or higher) in the following areas:

(1) Academic and disciplinary records were separate.
(2) Other information than academic status existed on transcripts.
(3) There were written provisions for the periodic routine destruction of nonessential and noncurrent disciplinary records.
(4) The student press and publications were free from review and advance approval of copy.
(5) The authority to remove editors from office lay in the hands of others than those who appointed them.
(6) In cases of violations of civil law, the College appraised the student of sources of legal counsel, notified his parents, and initiated disciplinary proceedings against him.

(7) A student involved in disciplinary proceedings was allowed to remain on campus and attend classes.
(8) The College played a role in the search of a student's premises.
(9) Restrictions as to whom student organizations could invite to speak on campus.
(10) Students were full participating members of Faculty and Presidential Tenure and Selection Committees.
(11) The student newspaper was an independent corporation.

Conflicting responses from students and faculty were found in the areas of disciplinary proceedings and permanent record information. These statements on which the faculty and student samples varied are the following:

(1) More than half the students responded "yes" and 40 per cent "do not know", with the faculty responding the opposite way, to the statement that the College had a written policy as to the information which should be a part of a student's permanent educational record.
(2) More than half the faculty responded "yes" and the rest "do not know," with the student sample responding the opposite way, to the statements that students who were involved in disciplinary proceedings were informed in writing of the nature of the charges against them, and that there were adequate provisions for appeal of disciplinary decisions.

SUMMARY

It is evident that there does not exist a definite knowledgeable understanding of the rights, freedoms and involvements among the respondent junior college students at the two institutions surveyed. In fact, both student and faculty samples indicated, on more than forty per cent of the items, that they lacked the knowledge to answer. Students and faculty did not know fully the policies governing students' rights and freedoms on the two campuses.

Our survey did not set out to test the hypothesis that the lack of such information could be a prominent factor in the student unrest which periodically reveals itself on the campuses across the country. However, the findings from our limited sample, coupled with a relatively modest amount of explicit observable unrest on the two campuses, did not support the theory that there was a high correlation between campus unrest and lack of such information.

The sample is of two junior colleges in different settings and geographic areas. It is too small to support generalized conclusions about social variables which we perceive to be highly complex. We urge many more surveys and much more motivational research to discover and codify the causitive relationships so colleges may create the desired context of student rights, freedoms and involvements.